



**DIFC COURTS' USERS' COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
18 September 2014 at 2pm  
DFSA Boardroom, Level 13, DFSA**

**Committee Attendees:**

Adrian Chadwick, Hadeef & Partners

Alec Emmerson, Clyde & Co

Hassan Arab, Al Tamimi & Company

Faridah Sarah, Galadari Advocates and Legal Consultants

Peter Gray, Gibson Dunn

Sheila Shadmand, Jones Day

Issa Baddour, Governor's Office

Collin Wu (delegate for Michael Ridgeway), DFSA

Mark Beer- Registrar, DIFC Courts

Amna Al Owais- Deputy Registrar, DIFC Courts

Cheryl Fernandes- Committee Secretary, DIFC Courts

**Guests:**

Reem Al Shihhe- Head of Human Resources and Business Excellence, DIFC Courts

Natasha Bakirci- Assistant Registrar, DIFC Courts

Lema Hatim- Senior Case Progression Officer, DIFC Courts

## 1. Welcome by Chairman:

Registrar Mark Beer chaired the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

## 2. Approval of the last minutes of meeting:

The Minutes of the Courts' Users' Committee meeting held on 10 April 2014 were approved.

## 3. Caseload Statistics: until end of August 2014

- **Court of First Instance:** 23 CFI cases filed
- **Court of Appeal:** 4 CA cases filed
- **Enforcement:** 9 Enforcement cases filed
- **Arbitration cases:** 4 Arbitration cases filed
- **Small Claim Tribunal:** 65 SCT cases filed

It was suggested by one of the members of the Courts' Users' Committee that the DIFC Courts should explore the possibility of acting as an option in Mediation Centre for regional insurance disputes, many of which are governed by English language contracts and involve international parties.

## 4. Courts' Activities – Deputy Registrar update:

The Deputy Registrar Amna Al Owais gave an update on the Courts' activities since May 2014 till date:

- **5 May:** DIFC Courts Lecture Series No.2 of 2014 on Jackson Reforms lecture delivered by Senior Costs Judge, Peter Hurst
- **14 May:** Pro Bono Seminar delivered by Deputy Registrar Amna Al Owais at DIFC Courts
- **19-23 May:** HE Justice Shamlan Al Sawalehi successfully delivered a presentation on DIFC Courts legal framework at the University of Washington School of Law for a CLDP programme
- **7 September:** DIFC Courts Lecture Series No.3 of 2014 on International Best Practices on E-Disclosure delivered by Robert Karrar-Lewsley, Mr. Yeong Zee Kin, Mr. John Lapraik and Richard Wilson QC

- **8 September:** DIFC Courts Mandatory Code of Conduct Seminar on 8 September delivered by Chief Justice of the DIFC Courts Michael Hwang and Phillip Punwar from Baker Botts.

#### **5. Delegations received at the DIFC Courts:**

- CBL Military Judicial Officers visited DIFC Courts through the Dubai Judicial Institute: addressed by HE Justice Shamlan Al Sawalehi
- A group of leading business school in Germany visited DIFC Courts through CBL programme: addressed by Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci
- 35 Law students from Ajman visited DIFC Courts through the Dubai Judicial Institute: addressed by HE Justice Shamlan Al Sawalehi
- High School students visited DIFC Courts from Al Ittihad private school group: addressed by Judicial Officer Maha Al Mehairi & Senior Case Progression Officer Lema Hatim
- Tawazun legal team delegation visited DIFC Courts: addressed by Registrar Mark Beer and Deputy Registrar Amna Al Owais
- 20 Judges from High Court of Ogun State in Nigeria visited DIFC Courts: addressed by HE Justice Ali Al Madhani
- Fitch & Co lawyers visited DIFC Courts: addressed by Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci
- Pinsent Masons lawyers visited DIFC Courts: addressed by Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci
- Hult MBA Business students visited DIFC Court: addressed by Registrar Mark Beer
- DFSA new intake of graduate trainees (TRL Associates) visited DIFC Courts: addressed by Judicial Officer Nassir Al Nasser
- DIFC Courts received a delegation from the Supreme Court of Singapore comprising of the Registrar, Senior Assistant Registrar and two Assistant Registrars on the 7-8 September. Various meetings were scheduled between the delegation and DIFC Courts staff to discuss areas of mutual collaboration.

#### **6. Conference Representation:**

- **May:** The Judicial Institute of Training - Judicial role in enhancing the Commercial Law - workshop at Sharjah Academic City; participant HE Justice Shamlan Al Sawalehi
- **June:** RAK Free Zone Co-hosted training event at the DIFC Conference Centre; participant Registrar Mark Beer
- **September:** 7th Annual Corporate Legal Counsel; participant Registrar Mark Beer

## **7. Media coverage:**

The Courts continue to receive good coverage in both Arabic and English newspapers – details of which were provided at the meeting.

## **8. Upcoming Events:**

- 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> September 2014; IACA in Australia. Registrar Mark Beer and Head of Human Resources Reem Al Shihhe to present at the conference
- 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> October 2014; Annual Judges Meeting
- 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014 ; Legal Gala Dinner at the Conrad Hotel
- 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2014; General Counsel Forum : Registrar Mark Beer to attend the forum in London
- 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014; DIFC Courts Lecture Series No.4 of 2014 : Introducing the legal community to the new Dispute Resolution Authority
- 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014; DIFC-LCIA re-launch event at the DIFC Conference Centre

## **9. Business Visit Visas for Visiting Counsel:**

Head of Human Resources Reem Al Shihhe shared with the members of the Courts' Users' Committee the proposal for business visas that would be offered for overseas lawyers registered with DIFC Courts Part II Registration who wish to appear for a specific hearing confirmed by the Courts. We will propose business visit visas that would be offered for a duration of 30 days

## **10. Developments of the Rules of the DIFC Court:**

Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci informed the members of the Courts' Users' Committee that Philip Punwar from Baker Botts is working on revised Commentary – new Rules book due for publication in October 2014.

#### **11. Practice Directions & Registrar's Directions:**

Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci gave updates on Practise Directions issued since May 2014:

- Practice Direction No.3 of 2014 on Confidentiality of Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) Judgments on Appeal to Court of First Instance; issued on May 28 2014
- Practice Direction No.4 of 2014 on Wasted Costs Orders; issued on June 23 2014
- Practice Direction No.5 of 2014 on Costs Regime; issued on August 12 2014
- Practice Direction No.6 of 2014 on Confidentiality of Mediation Proceedings; issued on August 12 2014
- Registrar's Direction No 1 2014 Indicative Hourly Legal Charges on May 8 2014

Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci also informed the members that the Mandatory Code of Conduct was issued on September 3 2014 and the DIFC Courts had organized an online seminar via Thomson Reuters WebEx delivered by Chief Justice of the DIFC Courts Michael Hwang and Philip Punwar from Baker Botts at the DIFC Courts.

#### **12. Nomination of new members to Education Sub-committee & Rules Sub Committee:**

Adrian Chadwick- Hadeff & Partners and Lema Hatim –DIFC Courts were nominated by the Courts' User' Committee as new members of the Education Sub-committee

Adrian Chadwick- Hadeff & Partners was nominated by the Courts' User' Committee as a new member of the Rules Sub-committee.

#### **13. DIFC Courts Academy Project:**

Assistant Registrar Natasha Bakirci updated the CUC members about Academy course which began on Monday 15 September 2014 and the next Advocacy course being planned for November 2014.

#### **14. DIFC Courts' New Website:**

Senior Case Progression Officer Lema Hatim presented the new DIFC Courts' website to the members of the Courts' Users' Committee. The DIFC Courts' are now working on updating a calendar on the website which would show Judges availabilities for 2015 hearings, which the members of the Courts' User' committee agreed will be very useful.

#### **15. Legal Gala Dinner 2014:**

Sheila Shadmand from Jones Day chairing the committee set up for organizing the gala dinner provided updates with regards to ticket sales and nomination of awards for different categories at the gala dinner. She also encouraged the members to increase the ticket sales through their contacts to make this year's event even bigger for the entire legal community.

#### **Next meeting dates agreed:**

Thursday, 11 December 2014

Meeting closed at 4:10pm